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**WASHINGTON-FIELD
RELATIONSHIPS IN
THE FEDERAL SERVICE**

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WASHINGTON-FIELD
RELATIONSHIPS IN THE
FEDERAL SERVICE

Lectures and Papers

by

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FOREWORD

THE LECTURE series constituting the basis for this publication was organized to explore some aspects of a particularly difficult problem of public administration, the problem of central-field relationships in the Federal Service. To the little published literature on the subject, the Graduate School is glad to add the ideas and significant experience contained in these four papers. All except the one on the Forest Service were delivered in the Department of Agriculture Auditorium late in 1941 as lectures jointly sponsored by the Graduate School and the Washington Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration. We regret that because of the war, it has been necessary to omit some of the original lectures. The paper dealing with the Forest Service was specially prepared for inclusion because of the important central-field experiences of that agency.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are due John Thurston of the Department of Agriculture and Paul C. Howard, an administrative officer on the staff of the Social Security Board; the former for major responsibility in preparing the manuscripts for publication, the latter for editorial assistance and wise counsel, and both for their cooperation in planning the original lectures. As chairman of the original series, James V. Bennett, Director of the Bureau of Prisons, added wit and continuity to the program.

ELDON L. JOHNSON, *Director*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
WASHINGTON-FIELD RELATIONSHIPS	
By Donald C. Stone.....	9
WASHINGTON-FIELD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FOREST SERVICE	
By Earl W. Loveridge and Peter Keplinger.....	23
WASHINGTON-FIELD RELATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD	
By W. L. Mitchell.....	35
INTERDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONS IN THE FIELD SERVICE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	
By James W. Fesler.....	51

INTRODUCTION

IN OBSERVING the far-flung operations of a huge Government Department, one is sometimes inclined to think that a great many administrative problems are, in reality, problems of time and space. Federal administrators, one almost feels, need the insight of a Kant or an Einstein.

Certainly it is true that the huge size of the National government adds immensely to the difficulties of administration. It is this characteristic of size, for instance, which so sharply differentiates many of the administrative problems of the National government from those of municipalities. By size is to be understood not only such a matter as the large number of employees of any given Department—in some cases passing the hundred thousand mark—but likewise the matter of distance, that is, the fact that the great body of Federal employees work, not in Washington, but in the field.

The problem of operating at a distance is a very hard one. On the one hand, national policies must be observed throughout the length and breadth of the land, and yet these policies must be general enough in character to permit adaptation of specific details to local differences. This is well illustrated in the paper by Mr. Loveridge and Mr. Keplinger. At the same time, as Mr. Stone and Dr. Fesler point out, the many individual programs of the National government must somehow be fitted together so that the total impact upon any given local community is harmonious. These are the ideal objectives, but their attainment is extremely difficult. For one thing, there is the problem of communication between Washington and the field, which Mr. Stone discusses with insight and humor. We have a hard enough time in exchanging ideas when we can talk face to face in the same language. When, however, the written word must take the place of the spoken one and when, in a sense, the Washington official and the field official speak a different language because each works in quite a different environment and each has quite a different pattern of information in his mind, the problem is immensely complicated. In consequence we get all the difficulties of lack of understanding of local conditions on the one hand and national objectives on the other, of uncertainty, of delay in correspondence, and so on.

To these problems of intercommunication must be added another even more perplexing. This is the question of the proper relationship and relative authority of the specialist technician and the general administrator—what Mr. Mitchell calls, “the moot point of administra-

tive versus technical control." As the lectures point out, this problem is at bottom one of specialization versus generalization, of fitting the contribution of each specialist into its proper and proportionate place in the whole. "Coordination," say Loveridge and Keplinger, "is the keynote."

It is the multiplicity and difficulty of these problems, which certainly cannot be denied to have at least certain philosophical implications, that make the subject of Washington-field relationships such a fascinating one. Nor can the growing importance of the problem be overlooked, as the National government, in war and peace, is obliged to assume more tasks. As functions become increasingly centralized in the National government, it is more and more urgent that their administration be decentralized. If that is too simplified a statement, then we might say that we must learn how to synthesize the national and the local, uniformity and diversity. Obviously, that is no easy task, but it is a most necessary one if we are to escape the discontent which would inevitably follow if local divergencies and local genius were to be overridden and ignored.

JOHN THURSTON

PAUL C. HOWARD

WASHINGTON—FIELD RELATIONSHIPS

by

DONALD C. STONE

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I PROPOSE to begin my discussion of Washington-field relationships by taking you on a tour of Federal offices in the field and in Washington. Rather than engaging in a recitation of administrative theory, I have enlisted the help of some of my staff to guide us in an on-the-scene inspection of some sore spots in this administrative area. Let us hear a few of these field and Washington officials express the manner in which some of their problems arise.

LIFE IN THE FIELD

A staff meeting of regional officials is in progress at Atlanta. They are discussing a new field bulletin defining responsibilities of the field staff. Tom Technical is speaking: "I think this bulletin is clear insofar as my duties are concerned. It says that representatives in the field are responsible to the technical divisions in Washington on technical matters, but are subordinate to the regional director for administrative matters. All of my work is concerned with advising the district units on their programs and methods. That is all technical work. This means I report to and take my orders from Washington." Regional Director: "Oh, yes?"

* * * *

Officials from several districts in the Rocky Mountain region are convened in Denver for a conference. In a hotel room after the day's sessions are over, three district managers are letting off steam. The man from Pocatello is saying, "These guys in Washington have no sense of reality. The District of Columbia isn't the United States. Procedures written there just don't fit—they don't take into account operating realities—I can't follow them and get the job done. They complain if Congress tries to pass a bill tying an administrator's hands on administrative detail and then they go ahead and write procedures in such detail that we're supposed to act like robots. It's one thing to sit in a swivel chair in Washington and dictate a new procedure, and quite another thing to apply it in Pocatello."

The man from Salt Lake chimes in: "Another thing—there are a hundred swivel-chair experts in Washington concerned with a hundred angles of our program. Each thinks his piddling little compartment is the most important—the only important aspect—and that full time should be devoted to it."

"What you're saying," observes the man from Montana, "is that we're over-functionalized—that's a Washington 50-cent word—anyway we're over-functionalized to the extent that line authority over us doesn't exist. We have not one, but a hundred bosses who can't agree among themselves. Most of the disorganization in the field exists in the minds of the Washington officials and their cross relationships."

* * * *

While we are in St. Louis, let's see what they are doing in the Purities and Derange Commission. I think if you listen you can hear the Chief answering his assistant who has suggested another visit by the Washington personnel director.

"A lot of good it would do, unless he spent more time than he did last year. First time anyone from the Washington Personnel Division had been around for two years. He showed up Friday morning about ten o'clock, took up two hours of my time talking about the war, and then at noon he suddenly excused himself saying he had to catch the one o'clock to New Orleans. Never reached our Personnel Section, where Ross was waiting, loaded with questions . . . Nice place, New Orleans, for a weekend!"

* * * *

In the corn belt we find ourselves in the home of a field officer in charge of a large region. He has a big job to do and receives the goodly salary of \$5,600 to do it. He is sitting at his desk poring over office papers as his wife asks, "John, how did things go at the office today? You seem in low spirits."

"Oh, not so good," he replies. "You know that plan I submitted to Washington for carrying on the fall program? Well, I got a letter today from Mullins, the Director, telling me to drop it. He said the people out here wouldn't like it. Out *here*, mind you! A lot he knows about out here. What burns me up is that no one who knows anything about these matters makes the decisions. Mullins didn't write that letter, I know. Such things get passed down the line without serious consideration to where some \$2,000 youngster struts his budding genius over it. This one was probably overtired from night law classes!"

* * * *

In Cansville, Kansas, a director of a State agency has been carrying on protracted negotiations through his regional office and Washington to have appointed a "Supervisor of Migratory Labor." Negotiations have proceeded leisurely, while crops ripen and groups of migrant laborers storm local offices seeking work in response to the widespread publicity that the State-Federal program would provide such service. He is on the phone listening to a frantic local manager saying: "There

are 500 men here asking for jobs; I was to be told where I should direct them. What shall I do?"

"Tell them there's a pink tea party on in Washington and all the classification experts are gazing into a crystal ball to see whether the classification sheet for 'Supervisor of Migratory Labor' should say he exercises *wide* discretion or *broad* discretion."

* * * *

Moving North, we find Smith, the crack operator in the Wabasha office of the Barn Debit Administration, waving a fat, official-looking circular.

"Listen, Chief, we might as well shut up shop if we have to adopt this new loan policy. It may apply to New England farmers, but it'll never work with our farmers here in South Dakota. It sure shows the loan chief's mind has never been out of New England, although they transplanted his body to Washington for that nice big desk in Room 210."

* * * *

Swinging down to Dallas, we find the local claims examiner in the Bulova office of the Survival of the Fittest Benefit Administration to be very overwrought and purple in the face. He is saying to the manager, "What can I tell that poor old lady today? This is the seventh return appointment she's kept to find out what the status of her claim is. The first week we were deciding whether the question had to be settled in Washington. The second week the Regional Office was tracing the claim because they had no record of receiving it. The third week the Regional Director and the Regional Attorney were fighting as to whether it should be returned here or sent on to Washington. The fourth week it was going through the mill of the receiving and recording unit in Washington, and the fifth week there was a disagreement between the claims adjudicators and the claims reviewers as to what amount the lady was entitled to. Then the sixth week the Washington lawyers got hold of it and questioned her eligibility to any benefit at all. They tell me this week that the claim has been brought to the attention of one of the Board members who's particularly interested in this claims eligibility question. Now what can I tell this lady? She's pretty intelligent; she's got a copy of the Act and she just keeps pointing to Sec. 103q and saying, 'It seems quite clear to me; I can't understand what the trouble is.'"

* * * *

LIFE IN WASHINGTON

And what is life like in Washington? First we'll go down to the Exterior Department to see the Assistant to the Under Secretary. We

find John Weary, Chief of the Chorus Service, also there. He is saying to the impatient Assistant to the Under Secretary, "I am sorry, but I really can't give you that information. I wired our office at Denver for it a week ago and I just now received a wire back saying that the Superintendent was away and that he had not authorized his assistant to release such important information during his absence." The Assistant to the Under Secretary: "My, oh my, I always wondered why the Secretary wanted the Chorus Service transferred from the Horticulture Department."

* * * *

Suppose we next stop at the V Street building of the D.P.Q. Administration for just one moment—the eighth habitation for the Administration in the 1942 fiscal year and the fifth of its 13 buildings. There we see I. M. Harassed, hard-working Chief of the Field Division. He leans back in his chair, lights his pipe, and philosophizes to his new stenographer, "To all these field offices, I'm a louse. I'm the guy who denies Keokuk a new rug, Fort Wayne a new supply cabinet, Dallas a bookcase, Spokane a water cooler, and so on. Each field office thinks it's the most important one and that each of its eccentricities are perfectly justifiable. As if the Bureau of the Budget and the Appropriations Committee will give us the money we think necessary to run our field offices! Where would we be if we let this money dribble out on silk window drapes and mahogany double desks? And since I have to decide what takes precedence, I guess I'm as popular as Frankenstein."

* * * *

In another agency the chief of a service division is speaking to the Administrator: "You'll have to put the blame in the right place. The Chief of Operations didn't refer those Cincinnati papers to me. How can I be responsible for the recruitment program if I am short-circuited by his men out in the field?"

* * * *

The Director of CRA has a number of his field men in for a conference. They have accused him point blank of working in a vacuum in preparing instructions to the field and issuing orders impossible to carry out because of ignorance of field conditions. Says the Director, "What have we got field officials for, if not to tell us of conditions in the field? That's one reason you're in here now and another reason why we spend so much time trying to develop a work reporting program. For two years now I've been hopping on this, and the idea hasn't even dented the surface."

* * * *

The treasurer of the R.F.D. is bawling out the chief statistician.

"Here it is the tenth of the month and the reports from six regions are still missing. Can't you do something about this?"

"My dear Roberts, if you have any idea of how to make those fellows in the field realize that every month is bound to end sooner or later, let me have it. I have circularized them again and again to prepare the reports promptly, but each time they seem to be taken completely by surprise when the month drops out from under them. Now, don't tell me that we ought to fire them—the new ones would be just the same."

NECESSITY OF DIAGNOSING PROBLEMS

These rambling incidents of trouble spots in the aggregate obviously give a very fallacious picture of Federal administrative management. Federal activities on the whole are well administered, and in terms of what the citizen receives for his money I am convinced he gets more units of service from his tax dollar than from his dollars spent for products of private enterprise.

However, there is great need for improvement in public administration and only by poking into some of the problem areas, as illustrated by the foregoing episodes, can we lay the basis for the necessary remedies. Indeed, if this Government is to be tooled to meet the burdens which inevitably will be placed upon it in the months ahead, we must look to sweeping reform in administrative practice. The first step in the solution of any problem is to diagnose the elements and factors which make up the problem.

Now comes the more difficult task of suggesting remedies for the types of administrative ills reflected in these cases. Many of the remedies are self-evident. However, let us try to identify a few of the ingredients which make for good or bad field administration. Most of them are ingredients common to administration of any sort; they just become translated into terms of field administration processes.

IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

The first and prime requisite, certainly, in effective administration is high quality of leadership. Because our attention is diverted so much towards such administrative terminology and paraphernalia as line and staff organization, span of control, budgetary allotments, personnel classification, decentralization, integration, functional responsibility, etc., we are too often apt to forget that the *sine qua non* for successful management is the caliber of the chief officials. Indeed, the kind of person heading an agency will, unless his hands are tied, determine the kind of administration that that agency will have. Sometimes it seems that these heads are not aware of this opportunity, this power which they possess. Many other administrative elements

are important, but they are all secondary to this one question of leadership.

If the proper man heads the agency (under favorable work conditions) it will generally follow that a sound organization plan will be established, high grade personnel will be recruited, morale will be good, the various segments of the work program will be coordinated, operations will be carried on according to carefully developed plans, public relations will be satisfactory, and the purposes for which the agency was created will be efficiently accomplished. Just look around at Government agencies, or any organizations, and test them by this one factor. Do you not agree with me?

While none of us may have any part to play in the selection of the head of an agency, we may all have some influence—direct or indirect—on the methods employed by top management in recruiting personnel, at high levels as well as down the line. I have always been amazed at the casualness with which recruitment of personnel, particularly administrative personnel, has been carried on in the Federal Government. The caliber of employees determines the caliber of work which an agency can do. This seems to me the first and constant concern of an officer in any supervisory position whatsoever; and the shelving of this concern by the average administrative official, the permitting of someone removed from knowledge of the objectives and methods of a program to do the selecting of major personnel, seems to me one of the principal weaknesses in administration of large agencies.

It does not take great insight to observe that in many agencies no real search has been made for the best man to fill particular jobs. In filling administrative posts, the tendency has been to promote some technical employee who has served long and well, but who does not understand or care for administrative responsibility. Often only in this way may a valuable employee be given a higher salary grade. In the case of many vacancies, the job becomes a prize with much jockeying by underlings to curry the favor of those who make or may influence the appointment. Nowadays personal politics rather than "political" politics may be the great enemy of the merit system. Positions should be filled by promotion if present employees are as competent as persons eligible from outside the agency or government service, but all too frequently no effort is made to discover the best man for the job. Isn't the appointment of a lesser qualified person equivalent to defrauding the government—continuous defrauding as long as he holds the position and a better man is available?

Until the last couple of years, almost no steps were taken by the Civil Service Commission to establish registers with persons trained and competent to carry on administrative work. What is more, ad-

ministrative departments and agencies had never requested the Commission to set up registers of such persons. With increasing administrative demands, as the defense program moves into high gear, it is gratifying to note that intensified attention is being given by the Civil Service Commission and the operating agencies to this crucial problem of finding the best administrative persons in or out of the public service. Without such persons being appointed to administrative jobs, both in the field and in Washington, we can never expect the most effective Washington-field relationships.

ORGANIZATION OF FIELD OFFICES

The organization of field offices is another basic ingredient in these relationships. In developing an organization to carry out a program, it is necessary first to determine just what kind of activities are to be carried on and how the work will be performed. Only after this clarification can the type of organization units, centers of coordination, and staff services be determined. While this, to my mind, is the rational approach, most organizations are developed from the top going down, rather than at the level of operations working upward. The whole purpose of the existence of Federal agencies is to perform public services, to benefit or serve individual citizens, and this means dealing with citizens where they are, that is, in the field. The administrative pattern of regions and districts and of field operating units must, therefore, be established in specific relation to the particular job to be done. Unfortunately, this is not always the practice. Regional boundaries are often drawn without consideration of the realities of operating factors but rather on the basis of a pattern carved out in somewhat of a vacuum in Washington or transplanted from another program of dissimilar character. Once established, generally in the early stages of a program, there seems no consciousness that administrative experience or change in direction of program with the passage of time may necessitate changes in organization or administrative procedure.

Responsible top officials in Washington tend to think it impossible to delegate authority to field offices to act unless there is a rigid check-control from headquarters. Field officers, no matter how well they are picked, will make mistakes—so do we all—and they will not always perform as the headquarters official would if he were in the field; and vice versa. That must be taken for granted. But this does not mean that a much better job will not be done in the field if field directors are given authority commensurate with their responsibilities. By keeping transactions *out* of Washington and approaching the Washington relation to the field as one of setting policies and standards and of giving help on difficult matters, the policy of freedom of action

will produce much better results than regimented circumscription.

A correlated question is the need for unity of command in individual field offices. Anarchy results if a field office has no head, with the chiefs of the various functions or services reporting administratively to their functional equivalents in the Washington set-up. Unity of command presents no problem where the field office is carrying out a unified purpose program, like the WPA, the Wage and Hour Division, and the Veterans Administration; here you can readily place a region or a State office under the full direction and authority of one person. But the problem becomes more difficult as you get into multiple purpose agencies like the War Production Board and the Federal Security Agency. It would not be easy, for instance, to place all of the Agriculture Department operations within a region under single direction. When the programs are so diverse, persons responsible for a particular program in the field become too far removed by channels and needs of clearances, and so on, from the subdivision of the department in Washington which has responsibility for the particular program. Nevertheless, the correlation of activities in the field is necessary to some degree. The responsibility of regional officers for achieving this correlation will vary greatly according to the extent to which the activities or agencies comprise a single or a multi-purpose program. In any event, our administrative ingenuity needs to be applied with full vigor to the development and refining of devices to coordinate the work of a department and of its various branches as it flows out to the field.

Finally, I should like to emphasize the need for providing field offices with the necessary management tools to carry on their responsibilities. The manager of a large field office must engage in budgetary planning and follow-up, personnel management, and program planning, and he must have staff to assist him in the general task of direction and coordination of operations. He can't rely on budget and personnel staffs in Washington to perform his management job, as seems too often to be the prevailing view in Washington. They may help, they may set policies and procedures, they may give him other kinds of direct aid, but if he is to be manager he must have his kit of management tools within arm's reach for use on all parts of his working organization. The common disposition to bind regional operations by rigid procedures through such attempts to provide all of the staff resources from Washington must be resisted if effective field administration is to result.

ORGANIZATION OF HEADQUARTERS TO SERVE FIELD

The organization of Washington headquarters to serve the field—notice the word serve—is of great importance to effective field admin-

istration. The various functional program groups into which an agency is organized inevitably result in a constant pull by each group away from the general agency focus into special functional foci. Each of these functional or program groups, in dealing with the field, similarly provides a centrifugal force pulling away from the central job to be done. The big problem of headquarters' administration is how to tie together all of the technical branches to bring about a unified impact on field offices.

The functional or technical branches always insist that they must deal directly with the field offices. However, an over-all agency approach, at least insofar as single-purpose programs are concerned, requires that these technical specialties be unified into some single stream of contact with the field. This means that the line of authority to the field must be down a central chain of command flowing from the head of the agency through a general administrative official or officials to the heads of the field offices. Some operating official in the line of command must be responsible for the *whole* field program.

This doesn't mean that all contacts by personnel in the various technical and functional branches must flow through this main channel. If it did, impossible bottle-necks, delay, and irritations would result. The major proportion of business which functional staff in the field carry on with functional and technical staff at headquarters is of a routine character, and there is no reason why such contacts cannot be conducted directly. However, they are to be conducted with the consent of the main line of command. The Washington chief of field operations, or whatever he may be called, has as one of his most important duties the task of determining continuously what types of actions, what kind of reports, what procedural or technical matters can be handled directly between field office staff and functional units at the Washington headquarters, without going all the way up and down the main line of authority. It is his job to see that this segregation of routine and non-routine is current and observed, that the field office receives the specialized help, guidance, policies, and plans which it needs. Similarly, it is his responsibility to assure that field directors set up organizations and carry out programs in accordance with the policies laid down by the agency's technical staff in Washington.

LEADERSHIP VERSUS CHECK-CONTROL APPROACH BY WASHINGTON

I have mentioned the evils of the transaction-checking approach of controlling, rather than supervising, field operations. This point warrants some elaboration, since it is one of the principal sore spots in Washington-field relations. In Bureau of the Budget studies of the administration of departments and agencies we find this common

characteristic: headquarters' officials cannot believe that field officers can be controlled unless a review or check is made, transaction by transaction, of the work carried on out in the field. There are, of course, notable exceptions.

Let me repeat—and it needs continuous reiteration—under programs which are essentially of a field service character, the job of Washington staff is to formulate the programs, establish policy, develop standards and some of the principal procedures, and to create a field organization which is competent to administer and permitted to administer the programs. These things cannot be done remotely by the Washington staff; field staff must participate all along the line. Policy, programs, and procedures must be developed and constantly revalued in terms of operating and administrative experience, and, with a few exceptions, this experience is taking place in the field. It is futile to set up policy that won't stand up on the firing line; it is wasteful to develop specimen organization plans for field offices unless they are custom-made to the realities and measurements of a particular situation. It is useless exercise to establish standards of operation if they do not fit the conditions in a particular area, or to establish such a rigid standard or pattern that it cannot be adapted to conditions varying throughout the country. It is a waste of effort to prepare regulations or instructions which field staff aren't in sympathy with or don't understand. Obviously, field staff must participate in all of these matters. If an agency sends out bulletins dealing with basic policies and procedures which hit the field "cold," that agency can chalk up a black mark on its administrative ledger.

The real job of the Washington staff is to help the field staff do its job, not to do the field job itself. This means elimination of the "directive" approach, line item budgets, transaction reviews, preaudits of cases, and, what is worst of all, the writing of voluminous letters and memoranda prior to taking action that is urgently needed. All these things kill initiative. They stifle administration. They give a black eye to Government. Delegation of authority must be real, not just on paper. Such delegation of authority must follow the spirit of a top official in one of the Federal agencies who recently told his field managers to go ahead and act when action was needed, even violating regulations, if necessary, and to tell their agency about it afterward. Only with this kind of administration can we expect to attract capable, responsible, broad-gauged officials in the field service.

This approach would eliminate instances of field agencies imperiled by budgets which have been prepared for them without giving them a chance to set forth their needs. Under such a philosophy, it could not happen that a new employee would walk into the office of a field executive who had never seen or heard of him and say, "I

have been sent by Mr. So and So, your Personnel Director in Washington, who tells me I am to be your executive assistant." No longer would field representatives from Washington come into regional headquarters and field offices to carry on an investigation as the principal part of their technique of reviewing progress in the field. Nor would field officials report that all goes well and that they have no problems, upon the visit of headquarters' staff. Gone would be the "administrative dachshund":

There was a dachshund, one so long
He hadn't any notion
How long it took to notify
His tail of his emotion;
And so it happened, while his eyes
Were filling with woe and sadness,
His little tail went wagging on
Because of previous gladness.

ROTATION OF PERSONNEL

In the illustrations given earlier, you will note the frequent situation where field staffs have little knowledge of the problems faced by the Washington officials and the Washington staff in turn lacks appreciation of the job in the field. As one remedy to this difficulty, I strongly urge more extensive adoption of the practice of rotating personnel. Washington staff should be acquainted with field realities by tours of duty in the field to the fullest possible extent. Field officials in turn should be brought into Washington for extended assignments. Furthermore, staff in one district office should periodically be moved to other district offices. The dividends of these practices are rich, both in terms of benefit to individual employees and of contributions to the operations and administration of the agency.

In most agencies field employees are not given the same attention for promotion as are employees in Washington. The latter are closer to top officials and the personnel officers who decide such matters. A systematic plan for reviewing field personnel for promotion, reassignment, and rotation will aid in bringing about more equitable treatment of all employees.

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

Another area for improving Washington-field relationships is that of communication—communication from the field to Washington and from Washington to the field. This is only one segment, but the most difficult segment, of the general question of communication between persons and units within an organization.

The purpose of communication, as I see it, is to *inform*, convey ideas, educate. Administration depends for its life blood upon the adequacy of communication, whether it be in the form of direct discussion between superior and subordinate, or of conferences, telephone calls, letters, memoranda, orders, circulars, manuals, or what not. Information must go from the line of operations up to the top in order that top leadership and policy may be sound, and decisions and thinking at the top must flow to the very roots of the organization, if well planned, productive action is to result.

This free flow of information from bottom to top and from top to bottom is vital to effective management. Frequently the basis for criticisms of field officers that Washington staff does not know field problems results from the failure of the field staff to inform them. In a few agencies, and I think the number is growing, top management has established an environment and a chain of relationships with the staff which encourages the transmission upwards of suggested changes in procedure, problems to be resolved, difficulties encountered, and proposed remedies. Conversely, in many agencies the top officials have willingly succeeded in locking themselves in an ivory tower. Sensitivity to this communications problem on the part of top leadership, enlightened personnel policies, and the pursuance of the consultative management approach at all levels will help break down obstacles to proper conveyance of information in large agencies. They will also lead to more intelligible administrative instructions, bulletins, letters, and memoranda.

This problem of communications is equally important in government relations to citizens. If the field employee is well informed about administrative matters as well as programs, he can deal more intelligently with the citizens—and that means the Federal Government in the eyes of those citizens. Since administrative departments are not subject directly to popular control, there rests great responsibility on administrators to find out what the people are thinking and how they are reacting. This means citizens generally, not just those who may benefit most by specific programs. The head of every agency dealing with the citizen has a real job in training his employees in the art of communicating and dealing with the public.

One of the greatest barriers to clear understanding of objectives and methods by both officials and employees, and the citizen public, is the growing tendency of administrative officials to clothe their thoughts and directives in a specialized language. The deeper we get into this specialized language, this jargon of high-sounding words, the farther we remove the intent of the ideas from the understanding of most readers. This was rather well illustrated sometime back by a member of Parliament who wrote to the London Times that if Lord

Nelson were alive today he would never say, "England expects every man to do his duty." The famous admiral's statement probably would run something like this:

England anticipates that as regards the current emergency, personnel will face up to the issues and exercise appropriately the functions allocated to their respective occupation groups.

In trying to combat this tendency, I have often wondered what could be the impelling motives toward the use of this jargon. Is it an attempt to make administration sound mysterious, difficult, and complicated? Does it spring from the prevailing reverence attached to something termed "technical"? Do officials think they will dignify their status, perhaps securing higher civil service classifications, if they place an impenetrable veil of words over their work? I sometimes think we might justly be accused of being an adolescent professional group sowing the wild oats of high sounding terminology in a vain expectation that administration will thus be made more scientific. I think we are mature enough and advanced enough to see through any such faulty reasoning. Administration must stand on its own feet—and its feet, in fact its heart, brain, and blood, must be the aiding of understanding of ideas by employees within an agency and by the general public. I submit that one infallible precept toward accomplishing this end is the simplification, rather than the compounding, of the written and spoken word which is the main vehicle of administrative action.

THE BUREAU OF THE BUDGET'S VIEW OF FIELD RELATIONS

The Bureau of the Budget's view of Washington-field relationships necessarily differs somewhat from that of an operating department. Instead of thinking in terms of a single program of action, or service to be rendered to a particular group of citizens, the Bureau of the Budget must view the Federal Government as a vast enterprise created by 130,000,000 members of a community called the United States for the purpose of providing themselves with services and facilities essential to safety, health, convenience, economic sufficiency, and culture. A wide range of departments, agencies, and bureaus provide these services but they all serve the citizens. With increasing specialization of Government programs, there comes an overlapping in citizen contacts. The Bureau sees an enormous job of keeping the various programs of the Government in balance, and of coordinating the services and contacts with individual citizens.

While the Bureau is physically located in Washington, it never loses sight of the fact that Federal programs are largely carried on in the field where citizens live. A recent study shows that there was a

ratio of 6 employees in the field to every one in Washington as of June, 1941. The bulk of the job of administration of Federal programs is obviously in the field, but the leadership and coordination of separate parts of the total operation of the Federal Government must come from Washington.

Individual citizens are not much concerned which agency provides the service; they do not distinguish between agency representatives, but rather think in terms of dealing with the Federal Government—and that is as it should be. They become bewildered by the variety of representatives of agency programs contacting them separately. They become annoyed when several agencies demand reports and data from them. Just as we need improved Washington-field relationships in the case of individual agencies, so we need general coordination of the entire work of the Federal Government as it relates to John Jones in Auburn, Maine, or Tim Collins in Seminole County, Oklahoma. You can appreciate why the Bureau is concerned when it finds the regions and districts of Federal agencies developed without relation to each other, and staffs of agencies located in the same city who do not even know of each other's existence. Here is a problem which will tax the ingenuity and the cooperation of many officials.

The President has the task of managing the Executive Government, of coordinating its various parts and of giving overall direction to this vast enterprise. The units in the Executive Office of the President are charged with helping him in this job. The National Resources Planning Board is studying problems of the regions and is developing long-range plans for the best utilization and conservation of natural and human resources of the country. The Office of Government Reports provides a central information source for citizens, a channel for complaining or praising; and in turn a conductor or sampler of citizen reaction for the President.

The Bureau of the Budget staff is the main agency dealing with the coordination of Government functions, the administration of Government programs, and the effective organization of Government structures. We in the Bureau of the Budget are well aware that the area of field organization and relationships is a basic and enormous part of the Federal administration. In many of our surveys we have to deal actively with these problems. Had it not been for the increasing need to put staff on emergency defense work, we would be going into some of these areas more thoroughly than is now possible. In any case, we are interested and desirous of helping whenever we can. But the solutions will only be found in common recognition of the problems which I have discussed and in a joint attack upon them by the departments and agencies and the Executive Office of the President.

WASHINGTON—FIELD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FOREST SERVICE

by

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THE PROBLEM of central-field relationships has been a difficult one whenever men have tried to exercise authority over activities carried on at a distance. It is not too much to say that the failure of England to observe some of the principles of effective field relationships caused the loss of her American colonies. In our own country, the issue of States' rights versus central authority has had its ups and downs from the beginning, and decisions have been based more on trial and error than on principle. Industry has had similar difficulties, and many firms which prospered in a limited area have failed when they attempted territorial expansion. In recent years, the increase in Federal activities has caused much thought to be given to problems of field organization in the Federal service.

From all this trial and error and experimentation, there have evolved a number of general guides or principles, the observance of which tends to make for successful operation. These principles are applicable, in the main, both to government and to private industry. We shall not attempt to list them, but a number of them will be illustrated in what follows.

The Forest Service has of course been obliged to work at a distance, and the nature of its operations compels decentralization. It has, therefore, given continuous and exacting scrutiny to the development of central-field relations. A brief historical sketch will help to give an understanding of present organization and problems.

THE BACKGROUND

The first official recognition of the work now being done by the Forest Service was an appropriation of \$2,000 in 1876 for the study of forest problems. This was the origin of the present research branch. In 1900 the work was expanded to include cooperation with private timberland owners in planning the development and management of their forests. Timber at that time was just beginning to be recognized as a crop, and owners had almost no information about good manage-

ment practices. Somewhat earlier, national forests had been established in the West, with their supervision entrusted to the Department of the Interior. In 1905 the administration of these forests was transferred to the Department of Agriculture. Here the research work, the cooperative work with States and private owners, and national forest administrative work were combined to form the Forest Service. These three lines of work are today the basis for the three operating branches of the Forest Service. While these three branches cooperate closely, each has its own functions, objectives, plans, and personnel. But all three, of course, are fitted to the overall objectives of the Forest Service.

For the sake of convenience the remainder of the discussion will relate mainly to the National Forest Branch. The principles and general relationships are the same in all branches, but their application necessarily varies with the content of the job to be done.

The national forests represent a considerable enterprise in themselves. They include about 180 million acres located in 35 states, or one-tenth of the total area of the country. They are capable of yielding annually six billion board feet of timber products. The present annual cut is about two billion board feet. In addition the national forests furnish summer range for twelve million head of stock, mostly sheep and cattle. The forests also provide a home and food for several million big game animals, with an estimated economic value of more than a billion dollars. As a recreation resource, the national forests furnish a vacation playground for more than thirty million visitors. Providing the needed facilities and services for this number of visitors is in itself a sizable job. The sale of timber, forage, and other national-forest products and services annually amounts to more than seven million dollars. All this is in addition to the work of the two other branches, research and state and private forestry, which are concerned with a much larger and more valuable area.

WASHINGTON-FIELD ORGANIZATION

The National Forest Branch is organized on the basis of purpose, process, material, and place, all four, to use the terms Gulick employs in *Papers on the Science of Administration*. In our own thinking, however, we combine the first three and say that we are organized on the basis of function and place. We have a functional organization overlapping a territorial organization. Functionally, we have such units as timber management, range management, wildlife management, fire control, engineering, finance, and personnel; territorially, the United States is divided into ten regions, each region into forests, and each forest into ranger districts.

The line of authority runs from the Chief of the Forest Service to

the Assistant Chief in charge of National Forests, to the Regional Forester, to the Forest Supervisor, to the District Ranger. The Assistant Chief in charge of National Forests, whose office is in Washington, has full operating responsibility, including planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and so on, for all functions and activities. He in turn delegates to division chiefs, also located in Washington, responsibility for particular functions. These functions, as categories or groupings, one might say, of jobs to be done, necessarily extend to the field. In the region each function is again represented by a regional division. Take the function of timber management, for example. In Washington there is a Division of Timber Management, which is responsible for overall problems of timber management. In the region there is likewise a Timber Management Division. At the forest level there is not a division but rather a functional "staff" man, and in the ranger district there are whatever number of men are needed to do the work.

Here, then, we have a secondary organizational "line" parallel to the first and, like it, running from top to bottom. There are as many of these secondary lines as there are functions. The purpose of the first line, that is, the so-called line of authority, is primarily that of coordinating the work of the functional divisions, although it has other important duties, as will be seen later. The various functional lines must be kept in balance and held within their proper fields. Each function is defined as closely as possible, but borderline cases are continually coming up and shifting situations require constant watching.

The relationship between the line of authority and the functional lines is exceedingly important. Briefly stated, the relationship is this: General policies are issued down the line of authority, and only down that line. Within the framework of established policies, a functional chief in Washington may issue instructions to the Regional Forester. While these instructions are addressed to the Regional Forester, as a rule they are automatically routed in the regional office to the appropriate functional chief. The Regional Forester instructs his functional chiefs as to what types of matters they are to take up with him, and it is then the responsibility of the regional functional chiefs to see to it that the Regional Forester is consulted on all such matters. The same practice holds as between the regional office and the Forest Supervisor's office.

THE REGIONAL FORESTER

Now, while ordinarily there is thus an open channel of communication down the functional lines, within the framework of established policies, it is obvious that the matters coming down the functional lines may add up to more than the budget of a given region will bear, or may overemphasize one function and underemphasize another.

Likewise, it is inevitable that at times there will be differences of opinion between functional chiefs in the region and the corresponding functional chiefs in Washington or between the latter and the Regional Forester. In all such cases, the line of authority comes into play. The Regional Forester must see that a balanced program of activities is carried out, and if he cannot agree with the functional chief in Washington he goes up the line of authority to the Assistant Chief. Similarly, if a functional man in a region should disagree with the corresponding functional man in Washington, the regional man would go to the Regional Forester.

It must be clearly understood that all functional officials in the region are, in the last analysis, responsible to the Regional Forester, and not to the Washington functional chiefs. They are employees of the region, not of the corresponding functional division in Washington, and the Regional Forester is their immediate supervisor. Upon him rests ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of *all* operations in his region except research.

By this arrangement, it is possible to take full advantage of technical specialization and permit maximum freedom of contact between technicians at the several levels, but at the same time insure the coordination, balancing of functions, and the overall view which are absolutely indispensable to effective operation. Similarly, each person in the entire Service knows where his ultimate responsibility lies, and this, too, is indispensable if energies are not to be dissipated and employee morale undermined.

With this picture in mind—a group of functional lines paralleling a controlling coordinating line—we are ready to consider field relationships in greater detail. While the Assistant Chief has full responsibility for national forest operations, it should be clearly understood that he and his division heads in Washington exercise control only at the overall, nationwide level. That is, within the mandates of Congress and the Secretary, the Assistant Chief and his Washington staff formulate objectives, determine policies, develop plans, establish standards, and check accomplishments. These objectives, plans, policies, and standards must apply to the nation as a whole and must be general enough and broad enough to cover all possible conditions.

The Assistant Chief then delegates to each Regional Forester control over all operations within his own region, subject to the requirement that he must operate within the framework of the policies, plans, and standards established for the country as a whole. The Regional Forester, with his staff, then fixes the objectives for his region. He establishes regional policies, makes regional plans, establishes regional standards, and, of course, makes certain of compliance. This is necessary because each region is different. Condi-

tions in the Southeast, say, differ very materially from conditions in the Pacific Northwest—the timber is different, the type of recreation is different, the wildlife is different, and so on for all functions. Each region makes its own plans and carries on its own activities. It does whatever is necessary to make the forests of greatest value in the social and economic life of the region. The only restriction is that everything done must contribute to the national objective, must come within national policy, and must be up to national standards. The field, then, stands on its own feet and is responsible for making its operations contribute most to the region within which its forests are located.

There are some exceptions to the foregoing, although it will be seen that even these are in reality applications of the general principle that the Washington staff should confine itself to national matters. Sometimes an operation, even though it is located entirely within a region, is of national importance. It then must be handled on a national basis and by the Washington office. For example, a small timber sale is of only local significance, but a large one affects national markets and has national economic importance. It is difficult to say exactly where this change takes place, but now it is estimated to be around 50 million feet. If a sale involves more than that amount, it must be approved by the Washington office; if it is less than that amount, it may be approved within the Region without reference to the Washington office. The same general rule controls in all other functional activities.

The pattern which we have described as governing relationships between Washington and the regions also prevails as between the regional office and the forest, and between the forest and the ranger district. At the forest level, the Supervisor is the coordinator. He must see to it that all functions are given equal attention according to plan, and that range work, for example, is not crowded out by a growing demand for timber. He must also interpret regional and Washington policies and give them local application. He must determine his local forest objectives and plan and direct the work of his forest. His plans must, of course, lie within the framework of the regional plan.

THE RANGER AND THE COMMUNITY

But it is at the ranger district level that most of the work is done. The Ranger is the local manager of a forest property. It is he who comes in direct contact with the public. He meets the hunter, the camper, the stockman, the timber man face to face. He supervises sales, measures the product sold, issues permits, and arrests trespassers. He is the local manager of property worth anywhere from half a million to a million and a half dollars or more.

In order to work effectively, the District Ranger in turn must set objectives and devise a plan of operations. His plan must, of course, lie within the framework of the objectives, policies, budgets, and technical standards set by those above him. But he still has very broad planning and executive authority. The Ranger does the ultimate planning right down to individual trees. It is usually he who decides which area and which trees are to be cut first. To make such decisions, he must know both his timber and his local community. He must fit his timber business into the life and needs of the community, for he is a part of it. He works with it and plans with it, and he sees to it that the forest is not regarded as something run from Washington and existing apart from the locality, but instead that it is looked upon as a local enterprise and a community asset.

The Ranger does all this, mind you, within the framework of national, regional, and forest objectives. He is checked mercilessly against policies and regulations and must conform; but since it is a fundamental national policy that the forest take its place locally as a contributor to community prosperity, the Chief of the Forest Service sees to it that the Ranger's authority is protected and that no staff or line man above him sabotages his planning. In other words, he has his job and is protected in it, but he is also kept within bounds.

In addition to planning, the Ranger of course has a great many executive responsibilities. He is responsible for fire prevention and fire fighting, timber management, supervision of livestock, and various matters having to do with recreation, including protection of wildlife and supervision of recreation areas.

The District Ranger is responsible only to his Forest Supervisor. He may meet the functional chiefs, either in his district or in their offices, and he may freely discuss his plans and theirs. But he does not receive orders from them, for orders come only from his immediate superior, the Forest Supervisor.

PLANNING: HELP OR HINDRANCE?

It may be asked, why all this planning and replanning at each administrative level? Why not, as Taylor suggested, establish a central planning unit and let it plan for all levels? Such a unit, it might seem, could not only produce well coordinated plans, but also relieve the field of the task of planning and permit it to give its full time to execution. But we can be certain that any such arrangement would fail to meet the need for what might be called territorial planning, that is, for sympathetic and informed matching of plans of action to local needs and aspirations.

Take the function of timber management again. There can be no true planning until there is a national objective and a national policy, but these in reality are just the first steps in planning. The

national objective might be to put each unit on a sustained yield basis; it might be to increase income by selling as much timber as possible; it might be to hold government timber off the market in order to encourage private sales; it might be to produce not quantity but only the very highest quality product regardless of cost; it might be a thousand and one other things, any one of which would influence all field planning clear down to the very last acre. Overall planning is the true function of the central or national office. With the national plan as a guide, each region can plan the management of its timber crops. But no two regional plans are alike: Region Eight has Southern yellow pine, Region Nine has mixed hardwoods, Region Six has Douglas fir, and so on. Each meets the national requirements as best it can with the material it has, and in its own economic and social environment. The same is true for the National Forest and the ranger district. Each plans with what it has to meet its own peculiar situation.

It is only by this process, we feel, that it is possible to reconcile the need for uniformity in national policies with the equally important need for recognition of local differences.

In this connection, it must be remembered that planning is by no means solely a matter of policy coming down from the top. National policies very commonly grow up from the bottom, and in all cases national policies are checked against operating experience in the field. There is a constant two-way flow between Washington and the field. The process by which policies are developed is frequently something like this: A region has a case not within its delegated authority and must, therefore, refer it to Washington. The region not only analyzes and reports the facts of the situation but also tells how it thinks it should be handled. The Washington office makes its decision. Soon other regions have similar cases. The Washington office now takes from these similar cases their common element, makes a general decision, and sets a national policy. Thereafter the regions, with the national policy as a guide, make their own decisions within its terms, without reference to the central office.

COORDINATION IS THE KEYNOTE

This form of organization requires persistent, continuous, and firm coordination. Strong men particularly have a tendency to overstep their bounds. There is never time or money to do everything that should be done. Because of this, it is almost inevitable that each functional chief will tend to push his own work interests. There is also a natural tendency to reach down into the next lower level and to assume responsibility for things which should be done only at that level. We all believe in decentralization as a theory and we believe that others should practice it, but in our own work we tend to want

to hold on to everything we have and to reach out for more. This tendency is normally strongest in the men of greatest ability. Yet to permit them to act without restraint is to disrupt both operations and morale. This makes the coordinating job both difficult and important—immensely important. It is the keynote of our highly decentralized organization.

The planning process which we have described is essential to coordination. Plans enable the Chief of the Service to see functions in relation to each other and allocate proper weight to each. If one function is being pushed at the expense of others, it is possible to check the tendency before harm is done. Usually it is checking rather than prodding that is needed when the staff of an organization is alert and enthusiastic. But it is possible that a functional chief may not be giving a region all the help it needs in the overall plans, policies, or standards which the region needs as a basis and background for its own plans. In that case, the Chief may need to encourage the functional chief.

Coordination also requires current knowledge of what is being done. When there are many equally important functions scattered over a broad territory, the reporting function must operate with accuracy and precision, and yet it must be kept from becoming burdensome. "Reporting" is used here as defined by Gulick, and includes inspections, audits, records, and, in fact, all the means developed by the executive to keep himself informed as to what is being done within his organization. In the Forest Service we usually call it "control" rather than "reporting," but neither word is suggestive of all the things actually done. We depend heavily on inspection; but with inspection, possibly because of large distances and the travel time involved, we combine supervision, planning, training, counseling, and situation analysis. A great deal of inspection is done by Forest Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors. Some is done by specialized functional inspectors working out of Washington or the regional offices. Our ideal inspector is one who can discuss long-range objectives and creative planning as well as technical and administrative standards and how they should be met. Techniques for developing in men the ability to analyze, forecast, and plan to meet future contingencies or trends are discussed in our training program.

Field relationships vary with the degree of decentralization, and decentralization varies, or should vary, with the job. Sometimes we hear administrators say that they "believe in decentralization" or that it is their "policy to decentralize." Neither expresses the position of the Forest Service, even though our organization is highly decentralized. We believe rather, that there is in any given situation a best way to organize to do the job and that the best way can be determined.

If the best way is through a centralizing of authority, then we believe in centralization; on the other hand, if decentralized authority is needed for the job at hand, then we believe in decentralization. In the national forests the public demands quick decisions and a flexible service that readily adapts itself to constantly shifting conditions. So in the national forest organization, the man on the ground is given a lot of authority. He can say definitely yes or no to almost any question.

WHAT DECENTRALIZATION REQUIRES

But remember what we have said about planning. The Ranger plans, but there are three sets of plans above him. One might think that this planning at higher levels would be a handicap and would so circumscribe the Ranger as to leave him practically nothing to do. But the opposite is the case. Without the broader plans, the Ranger would be lost in a maze of studies and preliminary decisions that would prevent his ever getting to the real job, except possibly on a rule-of-thumb basis. As it is, he has the advantage of studies made by hundreds of others, including the more technical and fundamental ones made by the research branch, and of guides and standards based on experience over the entire nation. With the right kind of help from the top, the man on the ground can do a much better job than he possibly could alone and still give the public quick decisions, without the delay that would result if matters had to be referred to Washington. But if the matter involves a section of the public beyond the territory of the local man, he must refer it up until it reaches someone with authority over the territory involved, but no higher. This is decentralization as it should be, according to Forest Service experience.

Too often we think of decentralizing as merely the delegation of authority. We say that authority should be as close as possible to where the work is done. But we fail to explain what is possible or what it takes to make it possible. Mere delegation is not enough. The groundwork must be laid and employees trained. If one delegates authority to subordinates before overall plans are made, policies determined, and standards developed, the result will not be a success. We know this from experience.

A good example is our forest research work. Research, we said, was the first division of our work to be authorized by Congress. At the time the national forests were transferred to the Department of Agriculture there was a small, efficient, highly centralized division carrying on this work. The Chief of the Forest Service, from studies which he had made when serving on various national commissions, was convinced that the national forest work should be decentralized. He was right, but what he did was to decentralize all activities, in-

cluding research. But research was not ready for the change. It did not have the right kind of plans or policies or work standards to function on that basis. The result was not one of the things we brag about. Later the Chief picked an able man to head up research, took it away from the regional organization, centralized it, reorganized it, and began to develop that background of objectives, overall plans, policies, and standards which must precede successful decentralization. After these preliminaries were on a sound basis, the trend started fieldward again and the work is now pretty well decentralized.

The national forest range function is sometimes cited as an example of an activity that was decentralized without policy or standard. This is not altogether true. What actually happened was this: The Chief, recognizing the need for prompt action, temporarily adopted the policies and standards of the stock industry. He immediately put a corps of "inspectors" in the field. These inspectors were in reality research men who studied conditions and needs on the ground. The information included in their reports was used in developing and improving policies and methods. Gradually the basis for decision shifted from the stockman's rule-of-thumb standards to standards with a recorded factual basis. This process of upgrading both policy and standard is still going on, but the research job has been shifted from the inspector to the professional research worker at the range experiment stations. We could give other examples of decentralizing too soon or too far, but we do not care to dwell on our mistakes.

In our discussion we have tried to develop the rule that governs. It is, it appears to us, something like this: Decisions should be made at the level of authority which most nearly represents the public affected by the decision. If the decision affects a national activity which concerns either the social or the industrial economy of the entire nation, the decision should be made by the national office. If a decision applies only to a part of the country or to a section of the population, the decision will best be made by officials in that area, who are familiar with the problem from first-hand contact. It is as bad to decentralize too far as not far enough, but there is far less danger of doing it.

DIFFICULTIES OF DECENTRALIZATION

One difficulty with decentralization is that it promotes provincialism. Men become narrow from their emphasis on the local viewpoint and are unable to see or appreciate the broader need. This is one of the most frequent causes of misunderstanding or friction in central-field relationships. The Forest Service tries to meet this problem through transfer of men to new situations, through details to work where new conditions will be met, through conferences with

men from other forests or regions, and through encouraging attendance at cooperative short courses offered for our men by a number of our leading universities.

To maintain good field relationships an organization must have flexibility, yet flexibility is most difficult to attain and still more difficult to maintain. Human nature itself is a big contributor to the difficulty. We get used to things as they are and feel that they are right because that's the way they have been. Even mechanical things, such as organization charts, tend toward rigidity. We hesitate to make changes not in accord with the chart. The so-called principles of organization tend to make for rigidity. Instead of determining where an activity can best be done, we say, "This belongs in engineering," "This belongs in personnel," or "This is process, we must not put it in a purpose division". This kind of thinking is common, but it approaches the subject backward. Sometimes an objective can best be accomplished in one way, sometimes in another.

One of the strongest factors tending toward rigidity is position classification. It is assumed that the work of an organization can be divided up into so many fixed jobs, that organization is rigid and unchanging. But in reality the man makes the job, and organization needs to vary with individuals.

In field organization and central-field relationships, flexibility is very necessary. Much of our work is closely linked to industrial activity and shifts with the ups and downs of business. A new development in a community or region may necessitate a change in responsibility. For example, recreation in the national forests was for years largely a local affair and was, therefore, handled by local forest officers. But during the Thirties, use of forests for recreation increased to such proportions as to become of national importance. It was therefore desirable to centralize certain phases of recreation until new policies and standards could be developed to meet the new situation. Many field men found it difficult to see this need.

There are also frequent changes at the Department level. A change there requires an adjustment at the Bureau level and usually an adjustment between Washington and the field. The more emphasis given to flexibility, the easier such adjustments are made.

SUMMARY

To sum up: The Forest Service discourages thinking of its organization as made up of two groups, Washington and field. It promotes the idea that we are all one group with a common purpose, working toward a common end. Some jobs can best be done in one place and some in another. We try to determine that place. Many decisions can best be made at or near the work level by officials in

direct contact with the people concerned. This fact has led us to develop a highly decentralized organization. We have found that if such an organization is to run smoothly, the duties of each official must be defined as exactly as possible and must be understood by those above as well as by those below. Further, if decentralization is to be maintained, the lower officials must be protected in their authority, particularly from encroachment by functional officials at higher levels. Voluntary recognition and cooperation are not enough. One of the major problems is to achieve proper coordination of activities at each level. For this purpose, we have established a strong coordinating line, on which we put much reliance. The Forest Service organization might be described as a synthesis of functional and territorial principles.

WASHINGTON—FIELD RELATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD

by

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WASHINGTON—FIELD relations were not developed by the Social Security Board as a logical growth of an established departmental system and a smoothly running program. On the contrary, the Board was called upon to organize a central departmental structure and a field organization simultaneously for three programs whose relation was philosophical rather than administrative.

Decentralized administration and the use of regional areas as an appropriate organization pattern was accepted from the beginning. The very nature of the task assigned to the Board made such a decision imperative, even if the sheer size of the operation had not argued the need for territorial divisions from purely administrative exigencies.

BACKGROUND OF THE ACT

The Social Security Act was hailed by millions of citizens as a cure for the economic insecurities of labor in a mechanized industrial system still caught in the bitter experience of the depression years. Its relatively limited place in the whole range of legislation enacted to bring the governmental system up to date with development in the industrial and commercial world was appreciated by too small a proportion of the population to put a brake on public opinion. The significance of a changing economy and the closing of the frontier were, and are, too deep for John Citizen. One thing he knew—that relief for his disaster had come belatedly and on an unplanned emergency basis. He wanted a government plan and he wanted the National Government behind it.

The social and economic planning of the Committee on Economic Security (the public advisory body set up by the President to study the problem) was primarily concerned with the plight of this same John Citizen and not with the administrative mechanics through which the Committee's recommendations would be effected. Its proposed plan was further amended and revised by Congressional consideration, and the omnibus bill finally enacted expanded the activities of certain established departments and created the Social Security Board as the vehicle through which the new activities would be administered. Old arguments pro and con functional organization of the departments of government were not the concern of that particular moment.

Responsibility laid upon the Board was for those programs which were aimed at the insecurities of labor due to involuntary unemployment or to impoverished old age, and at the insecurity of children due to both of these hazards and to the loss of parental support. Development of these programs called for a new interpretation of our philosophy of relationship between the individual and government, and brought the new agency into the middle of a newly developing concept of federalism and of coordination of the administrative functions of Federal, State, and local departments of government.

In considering the structure necessary to carry out these responsibilities, the Board faced the problem of establishing administrative machinery through which it could effectively direct a National and State venture into the field of social insurance, and at the same time cooperate in the administration of State systems of public assistance that had changed but little since the Elizabethan poor laws.

Basic variations between the three programs are inherent in the administrative and financial provisions of the Social Security Act through which they are established. These programs are:

1. A Federal contributory insurance program for workers, to provide benefits at retirement or to survivors at death, financed through Federal taxation and administered by the Board through a straight-line Federal administrative organization.
2. A State-Federal employment security program, established under the Social Security Act unemployment compensation plan, to provide temporary benefits during unemployment, financed by joint State and Federal taxes, and administered by state agencies whose administrative budgets are Federally financed, and which pay benefits from trust funds established by State taxes. The United States Employment Service, set up under the Wagner-Peyser Act and transferred to the Board in 1939, finds people jobs and is administered by State agencies whose expenses are paid jointly by the State and the Federal Government on a fifty-fifty basis.
3. A State-Federal assistance program for the needy aged, dependent children, and the dependent blind administered through State agencies and financed by State funds supplemented by Federal grants in aid.

The common basis of these programs was the need of the individuals affected; each program was set up, however, to run through different channels from the central agency to the individual. The beneficiaries have but one thing in common; each has encountered one of the hazards of the economic system. As individuals they were

units in the economy of communities that ranged from New York City to Tombstone, Arizona. And the State machinery through which two of the programs must flow was administered by a range of officialdom whose social, economic, and governmental philosophy covers a scope for which I will not dare a simile.

Review of these circumstances was sufficient to convince the Board that its administrative machinery must be close to the people and to the State governments and agencies, and flexible enough to make those adaptations necessitated by the variation in social and economic needs of the regions and states, without sacrificing a national pattern and essential equitable treatment for all for whom the provisions of the Act were designed. Complete realization of all of these objectives is yet ahead of us.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD

The Social Security Act of 1935, while providing in considerable detail for the actual programs to be administered, did not impose a specific pattern of administrative organization. It provided for a three-member, bi-partisan Board to be appointed by the President, subject to Senate approval, and vested in that board regulatory power and the duty of providing for the administration of the Act.

The Board, which under the Act could have concerned itself with administrative detail, has chosen rather to develop executive and technical staffs and to delegate to those staffs considerable administrative discretion on all questions except those involving major national policy. This permits the Board to devote the bulk of its time to the most important functions with which it is charged under the Act—functions which it alone is qualified to undertake with authority—the formulation and guidance of policy, and the fulfilling of its statutory responsibility for “studying and making recommendations as to the most effective methods of providing economic security through social insurance.”

There are certain administrative duties of which the Board cannot divest itself by delegation. These include approval of certain State laws and State agency plans and amendments; certification to the Secretary of the Treasury of appropriate grants and payments; and annual certification of States whose unemployment compensation laws have been approved by the Board as in conformity with the Social Security Act. Important internal administrative problems are subject to board consideration and decision.

Thus the Board is largely a policy-making body, freed from the recurring questions of administrative detail which can so easily hamper the development of unified and progressive policy in any sphere of government activity.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The Board's responsibility for the over-all administration of the existing programs, and of the bureaus established to serve and operate them, is exercised through an executive director.

The Board has established three bureaus to administer the three programs:

The Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance administers an all-Federal line operation reaching down to the ultimate individual beneficiary.

The Bureau of Public Assistance operates a Federal-State program with a legal basis of cooperation through grants in aid for State welfare administration and assistance payments.

The Bureau of Employment Security administers the Federal-State unemployment compensation and employment service program.

The Board thus offers a laboratory for observing contrasting types of relationships operating side by side in a single organization.

In addition to these three operating bureaus, the Bureaus of Accounts and Audits, Research and Statistics, and Informational Service provide specialized services of the types indicated by their organizational titles. Personnel and legal services are performed for the Board by offices of the Federal Security Agency.

The activity of all of these bureaus and of the agency offices are correlated and implemented at the Washington level by the Office of the Executive Director. Special services for both Washington and the field organization furnished by divisions of the Executive Director's office include those commonly grouped under the heading of "business management".

Of particular interest in connection with Washington-field operations are three Divisions of the Executive Director's office—the State Technical Advisory Service, the Coordinating and Procedure Division, and the Field Operations Division.

The State Technical Advisory Service, in collaboration with the Bureaus of Public Assistance and Employment Security, develops standards of personnel administration for the more than 100 State agencies through which the administration of the two State-Federal operating programs is effectuated.

The Coordinating and Procedure Division, in addition to its specific and continuing procedural work, exercises the Executive Director's visé of the content of all material intended for duplication. Since the bulk of instructions are released in this form, the Division serves as an additional point for correlation and integration of the activities of the several bureaus.

The Correspondence Review Section of the Coordinating and Procedure provides the mechanics for exercising (in collaboration with the Field Operations Division) the visé of all outgoing communications, checking not merely for form but also for clearance and policy. This sounds more formidable than it really is. The results of this review amply warrant the slight delay, seldom more than a few minutes, to which outgoing material is subjected. The Section maintains binders of approved precedents and policy-forming memoranda on many subjects and is equipped to document any questions it raises. Many unpleasant, not to say dangerous, situations in Washington-field relations have been avoided by the existence and work of this section.

It is in the Field Operations Division that continuing correlation of Washington-field relationships is exercised for the Executive Director. This Division has both line and staff functions. It operates through a Management Section and a Methods Section.

The Field Operations Division supervises the administration and business management activities of twelve regional and two territorial offices, and visés outgoing communications addressed by any Washington office or two or more regions. Business management activities are coordinated by review of operations to insure general adherence to policy and administrative standards. The Division also acts as a facilitating agency at the departmental level in handling regional management matters, and is considered by the regions as a friend at court. To maintain this relation, prompt service, full and active support of valid requests, and sympathetically reasoned rejections are essential. These management matters include procurement, budget, travel, space, communications, and all phases of personnel management.

The regional offices submit monthly operations reports to the Division, containing production figures and amounts of expenditures for each of the service units. These permit comparisons of staffing relative to workload, and are of aid in the preparation of annual budget estimates and justifications. Preliminary preparation of budget requests is the job of the regional offices, but during initial periods of organization and in times of emergency, such budgetary factors as recommended changes in professional staff involving provision of services in the region, administrative restrictions of total amounts, and increases required by specific situations in individual regions make adjustments of regional estimates inevitable.

The Field Operations Division issues to the field a Regional and

Field Letter, which is both a weekly letter of instructions and an operating manual. This is one function which permits the Division to serve as a center for ironing out occasional bureau divergences from field practices and procedures of the Board. In achieving this, periodic conferences are held on both general and specific problems with the chiefs of the Washington field divisions of each of the several Bureaus. A daily review of carbons of all correspondence sent from Washington to the regional offices enables the Division to follow new developments from their inception, and to step in when program enthusiasm in individual bureaus threatens overall relationships in some area of the field service.

The Methods Section of the Division is responsible for studies of administrative problems in the field and for the summaries and studies of the operating statistics. Special projects such as the study of territorial administration and of field reporting processes are undertaken as the need dictates.

Conferences and reports have been most effective bridges between the field and Washington. In a period of developing and expanding program, the value of a session at which the regional and bureau directors are able to sit down and spend a week of intensive conference with the Executive Director and the Board on program, policies, and problems cannot be overestimated.

Periodic field visits made by the members of the Field Operations Division staff are the basis for review of regional office operating efficiency, personnel, interbureau relationships, organization and management, and also for special reports on major matters of policy and management which the Division prepares for the Executive Director.

The Field Operations Division in the Executive Director's office is paralleled by field divisions in most of the bureaus and certain other offices of the Board. Organization of these divisions in the operating bureaus follows three entirely different patterns. In the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance the field division is a major straight-line operating division. It maintains for the Bureau the *single* line of communication and control to the field. It is responsible for the technical supervision of the operation of the 477 field offices of the Bureau and accomplishes this largely through regional representatives. Communications and instructions of all sorts, whether on supervision, personnel, or management, are channeled through the regional representative. The Bureau is now in the process of decentralizing adjudication of claims, effectuation of this having awaited the development of standards and procedures and the training of field personnel. Coordination with other Bureaus of the Board, is, of course, maintained through the Executive Director's office.

The field division of the Bureau of Public Assistance handles per-

sonnel management and services for its professional staff in the field, and coordinates and releases, after clearance, instructions and correspondence going to the field from *all* divisions of the Bureau. Technical consultants from the Washington offices of the Bureau go into the field on request of the regional representative, for whom the field division controls the clearances of such services.

An entirely different pattern is employed by the Bureau of Employment Security. The four functional divisions of the Bureau—Employment Service, Unemployment Compensation, Fiscal and Management Standards, and Reports and Analysis—have direct functional lines to the field and are held responsible by the Bureau Director for interdivisional clearances. Coordination of the divisions is effected in the office of the Director of the Bureau, normally by post review of correspondence and by staff conferences. The usual overall clearances required by the Executive Director's office are, of course, obtained prior to action. The regional representative of the Bureau is held responsible for effecting coordination in the field and for correlating divisional instructions before forwarding them to the cooperating state agencies.

Informational activities are coordinated and directed through a central field division of the Informational Service. The Bureau of Accounts and Audits operates direct to the field through the sections of the Bureau charged with the responsibility for auditing the two Federal-State operating programs and effects coordination in the field through the Regional Auditor.

There is no formalized mechanism for coordinating the field divisions of the several bureaus. None is needed, apparently, since all problems which have arisen thus far have been adequately met through informal devices which have been adapted or developed according to the requirements of the difficulty at hand. The chiefs and staffs of the divisions are well acquainted personally, and are familiar with each others' work; these two factors have normally provided all the coordination necessary.

REGIONAL AREAS

Determination of regional areas and location of the regional offices was based upon study of the regional plans of established Federal agencies, the report of the National Resources Commission, special studies of population, communications and transportation, and other factors. Fourteen regions, two serving the territories of Alaska and Hawaii and twelve for continental United States, were established. The regional boundaries follow state lines. Under the regional offices, field offices for the local operations of the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance were opened as the program developed. The number at present is 477, though both number and location are still

being adjusted as experience dictates or as a shift in the population demands.

The concept of the ideal region, as an area bound together by common social-economic life, suffers a good many practical amendments and adjustments before effective administrative areas can be established, but by and large the areas selected have proven workable. At some few points experience would recommend an adjustment of lines, but the necessity for revision has not been sufficiently urgent in the past six years to offset the disadvantages of a change.

Areas established, staff was the next consideration. The typical regional staff consists of:

- The Regional Director, the administrative head of the region.

- The Executive Assistant, assistant to the Regional Director and now more properly described as the assistant regional director.

- The Regional Attorney, a representative of the General Counsel of the Federal Security Agency assigned to act as Counsel to the regional director and his staff.

- The Personnel Methods Consultant, a technician on merit system methods.

- The Regional Representatives of the operating and service bureaus, administratively responsible to the Regional Director and technically to the several Bureaus (Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, Employment Security, Public Assistance, Accounts and Audits, and Informational Service).

- The Regional Referee, who hears appeals from administrative determinations of the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance in claims and wage-record discrepancy cases.

- The Regional Chief Clerk and secretarial and clerical staff.

After areas were established and a staff appointed, the need for a definition of authority and relationships soon arose, and Administrative Order No. 11 resulted. More heat, and, we are sometimes inclined to think, less light, have accompanied arguments in regard to this order than any one other administrative order ever issued by the Board. Much discussion has centered around the moot point of administrative versus technical control, which in this instance might be expressed, in much simplified terms, by a query as to whether the line from bureau to regional representative is broken or solid. Several revisions of the order have been made, but for the last few years all have been willing to let the concept of Washington-field relationships be slowly tempered in the furnace of experience. On certain basic points the pattern has taken shape. Policy-making is shared between the field and Washington staff to a degree unusual in older Government agencies. Democratic management is a Board policy, and the

advice and assistance of the field staff as well as of the Washington staff on projected plans, policies, and programs is generally sought. Naturally, the extent of such participation and procedures for securing it vary between bureaus.

After policy decisions have been reached and stated, the field organization assumes a large share in interpretation of the policy, and in keeping the Executive Director and the Board informed as to its effect upon programs, or upon the cooperating State agencies and the public.

The Regional Director may be a development in regional management unique to our organization. As the representative in the field of the Board and the Executive Director, the Regional Director exercises administrative supervision over all Board activities in the field and keeps the Board and the Executive Director informed of the progress of Board programs in the region. The Regional Director's administrative authority over the technical representatives of distinct program and service bureaus differs from the accustomed pattern of Federal agencies where the ranking field official is most frequently a technician in a specialized field which is also the chief function of his agency. The Regional Director of the Social Security Board is required to be an administrator competent to make effective use of a number of technicians and special consultants and to be skillful in coordinating their services.

The relationship between the Regional Director and the regional representatives of the bureaus has been an interesting development. The fact that these representatives are on the budgets of their respective bureaus and not on that of the regional office has, inevitably made for a certain divided loyalty, and a sense of conflict in the minds of the professional staff. This was more marked in the early days of the Board than it has been in recent years. Two types of forces have operated to weld each regional staff into a unit. Propinquity and the sharing of common experiences, meeting problems together, and perhaps even working out a good story on the reason for regional variations from a national pattern have helped considerably. Also, the strength, personality, and constructive leadership of the Regional Director has probably been of greater importance in developing regional relationships and morale than any number of administrative orders and functional charts. The regional representative who faces an antagonistic State legislative committee learns to value the negotiating skill and overall governmental knowledge of a strong head of the regional office. Bureau Directors also come to depend upon the supporting and facilitating strength which this leadership brings to the accomplishment of each bureau program.

The effectiveness of regionalized operation of this type depends

largely on the concept of the regional representative, and on his responsibility to the Regional Director and to his bureau. He must be relied upon to comply effectively with his bureau's national technical standards and instructions, and at the same time must have an awareness of the general social and economic problems of the region. Only thus can he be equipped to make his full contribution to the information and decisions of the Regional Director and of his own bureau on questions affecting general policy. Functions and qualifications of representatives are naturally diverse, ranging as they do from line responsibility for a straight operating program in Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, through the state relations work of Public Assistance and Employment Security to the professional duties of the legal, auditing, and informational representatives.

Responsibility for maintaining contacts and relationships with the cooperating State agencies which actually operate the Public Assistance and Employment Security programs is a responsibility of the appropriate regional representative. Correlating State agency contacts of the various members of the regional staff is a function of the Regional Director, normally effectuated through the regional representatives.

In the cases of the regional attorney and the merit system consultant, a somewhat more complicated situation develops, especially as to contacts with the State Attorney General's office or the State Civil Service Commission. Here again supervision by the regional office assures a coordinated approach to the State. The particular aspects of the relation in the specialized field of litigation, where the General Counsel's office becomes to all intents and purposes the operating agency, require especial care.

Positive effort to correlate and perhaps soften the impact on State agencies of the Board's field and departmental visitors is made by the Regional Director. Travel schedules of the members of his own staff are furnished him in advance, and reviewed for administrative planning and duplication of visits or visitors at the same point. Here again the travel allocation for the regional representatives is a part of the bureau's and not the Regional Director's budget and differences of opinion sometime arise.

The Regional Director and the regional representative find mutual concern in the handling of technical consultants who come from Washington to advise on highly specialized problems or, in the case of new programs, to observe the State agency operation. A far from unimportant phase of this Federal-State relationship with which the regional office is concerned grows up around the number of federal agents who may be found at any one time in the State offices, where threats to establish traffic regulations for Federal visitors are not infrequent.

Balance between the Regional Director and the regional representative is frequently effected in evaluating the services of the bureau field staffs in the efficiency ratings given by the Regional Directors and reviewed by the Bureau Directors. The varying weight or emphasis given by the Regional Director to the qualities of administrative planning and interpretative skill in contradistinction to the bureau weight for competence in the professional field of the program involved has generally led to a better rounded final evaluation than either would have been able to make alone.

PROBLEMS

So much for the organizational pattern which has been developed by the Social Security Board. I have described it at some length, placing particular emphasis on structures and relationships because they are the product of our experience and within them our Washington-field relations are maintained. The problems involved in making this structure work are apparent in the organization itself.

Let's review a few of these major problems and consider briefly the devices which the Board is using to meet them.

Many of the major questions which have arisen in connection with decentralization in our organization are familiar to other Federal agencies and are always encountered in the process of developing a field organization. Perhaps the universal problem is the extent to which administrative authority is to be decentralized. In the Social Security Board, as in other agencies, no single conclusive decision on this point has been established and maintained as a final and permanent policy. No policy should be too rigid to permit adjustments required by shifting program emphasis or the vicissitudes of time. As an overall policy the Board believes that authority and responsibility *should* be decentralized, and in practice the trend of operation has been toward decentralization.

Another classic problem in Washington-field relations is that of administrative versus technical control. At no time has there been complete agreement between Regional and Bureau Directors as to the precise meaning of some of the phrases used in defining "technical" and "administrative" in administrative orders. Nor have all three operating bureaus ever been in simultaneous agreement as to the extent to which decentralization of their own operation was either a fact or desirable theory. At present, a generally sound working relationship is established between the administrative and professional staff in the field. Realization of interdependence and mutual confidence must grow up among a group far from the central office, and faced with the constant pressure of expansion of work and the necessity for results. The leadership and ability of the Regional Director, and the extent to which he brings sound counsel and strong support

to the assistance of technical staff members, to a large measure decides the basis of this relationship.

In the field then, technical versus administrative direction is not ordinarily a major problem. The problem has been solved by strong effective leadership making for practical, day-to-day coordination. This is reinforced at the Washington level by emphasis on the position of the Executive Director and his office as the channel through which overall administrative and technical policy is issued.

At several points the importance of leadership in our decentralization effort has been mentioned, and the important role that the Regional Director has taken in providing it. As you will recall, Mr. Stone, in the first lecture, put leadership at the top of his list of Washington-field problems. Our experience in obtaining regional leadership sheds further light on the problem.

The initial appointments of Regional Directors were made by the Social Security Board (under an Executive Order) without compliance with the competitive provisions of the Civil Service Act and Rules, although the requisite qualifications for the individuals appointed were established before the Civil Service Commission. Individuals were selected who had uniformly high qualifications for this job of leadership. The task of staffing top administrative positions in the field has given the Personnel Division some of its worst headaches, since it involved expressing in Civil Service language qualifications which deal with high qualitative factors and evolving an examination process which would measure capacity for social leadership, skill in the fine art of negotiating, personality, imagination, and integrity. Three examinations have been given to establish registers for Regional Director. The experience was far from satisfactory, and the Board has directed special attention to the ways and means of developing personnel within our own organization for promotion to these positions.

Given the necessary leadership and a working solution of the administrative-technical bugbear, a sound plan for decentralized administration must have, as a cardinal item, an adequate body of written rules of the game in the form of manuals of policy and procedure designed to set out areas of responsibility, standards, and, (where necessary), details of operation. In addition there must be prompt and well-organized channels for communication of instructions and reports.

In the Social Security Board there have been developed three principal groups of administrative "Hoyle." First of all there are administrative orders and related instructions issued in manual form through the Executive Director. These orders set out broad administrative and technical policy and defined areas of responsibility. Administra-

tive Order No. 11 covering regional organization has already been mentioned. In this group of instructions are the orders prescribing practice on personnel, budgets, and other business management operations, all of which are interpreted in detail in a Field Service Manual. Important too in this group, is the weekly Regional and Field Letter which serves as the basic regular medium for transmitting instructions and information to the field.

A second important group of manualized material is that developed and used by the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. Here the job to be done in the field is an operating one. Uniformity in operation is essential to insure equitable treatment for the beneficiary and to secure the greatest administrative efficiency in the huge production job that the Bureau has to perform. Procedures have been established in organized and systematic form, through joint Washington-field experimentation, analysis, conference, and review. Another important device used by the Bureau is its six-months' operating program, developed with and issued to the field, which sets definite standards of performance for all units and individuals in the organization.

A third group of basic administrative documents are being developed by the two Bureaus (Public Assistance and Employment Security) operating Federal-State programs. Here the manuals assume a different character, because the job has been to provide guides for assuring that minimum standards of state operation will be effected. The process has been slower, but the essential need is fully recognized. Equally important are the manualized standards which have been issued by the State Technical Advisory Service for the guidance of its regional consultants and the state agencies in the development of merit systems.

These three groups of manualized standards and instructions are basic tools, without which the decentralization process in the Board could not have progressed as far as it has. The standards and instructions alone, however, aren't worth a great deal unless personnel in regional and field offices are prepared to discharge the responsibility put on them through decentralization. Having personnel able to assume responsibility is in good part a problem of recruitment. Equally important, however, is the in-service training of the personnel selected.

Training for the stenographic and clerical personnel in the field is complicated by the isolation of the small field offices and the difficulties of providing a channel through which training may be conducted. In the regional offices classes in the stenographic style manual and in Board program and policy are more or less regularly conducted for the clerical and stenographic staff. An experiment in the field of corre-

spondence-course training did not produce very satisfactory results, and for the present at least has been abandoned in favor of the class method in regional and larger field offices, and in the development of more expert supervision.

Training for the professional field staff will be an increasing problem. All members of the departmental and field staff paid \$2600 and over are required to take the basic training course in which an attempt is made to provide the necessary background in the economic and social phases of the program, as well as knowledge of the administrative structure. Continuation of training for the field staff has been provided almost entirely through the medium of conferences of regional representatives in Washington, and through field supervision. The addition of a number of junior members to the regional professional staffs is a complicating factor in this situation, as junior staff do not attend the Washington conferences of all of the Bureaus.

In the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, intensive training of the regional representatives and their assistants and of the field office managers and their assistants is carried on continuously both in Washington and in the regions.

Maintenance of a career service for a staff in which so large an investment has been made is both a budgetary and a management concern. In Washington, constant attention must be given to assure consideration of the field staff when promotions and opportunities for professional advancement are available. In the regional offices a strong tendency develops to consider promotional opportunities within each region as a prerogative of the presently appointed regional staff. As to field office personnel in the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, this is even more an interregional problem, and resistance to the transfer of employees from another region rather than promotion from within the local organization has caused considerable difficulties. Frequently stenographic and clerical employees who have come to Washington later desire transfer back to their homes. A continual problem also arises in connection with transfer at the employee's departmental grade and salary, due to regional pressure to bring them in at lower grades and minimum salaries.

To each problem specific answers have been given. Through all the answers runs the common aim: Employment with the Social Security Board is an opportunity for a career. The Board believes that the idea of a career service, combined with training, does much to insure a group of employees who are willing and able to assume responsibility involved in decentralizing operations to the field.

A highly specialized problem grows up around the two territorial offices. In both Alaska and Hawaii the normal cost of living is considerably higher than it is in continental United States, while in

emergency periods, such as the present, it goes even higher. Practice among some Federal agencies is to classify jobs at a grade higher than in the States. In others a differential is paid. With the advent of classification in the field, a uniform and reasoned policy must be established to meet this situation, as otherwise the maintenance of even the small staff needed in these remote areas will be all but impossible.

A recent development, the full significance of which is yet to be evaluated, is the use of the regional offices of the Board as the field organization to carry out the responsibilities placed upon the Federal Security Administrator as Director of the Defense Health and Welfare Services. The Regional Directors were appointed by the Administrator as regional directors for this program, and a small professional staff has been assigned to each. Additional stenographic and clerical services are made available through accustomed channels, although debited to a special budget. This dual responsibility and relationship has produced surprisingly few complications.

To us the most significant aspect of this experience is the extent to which the regional offices of the Board were capable of expanding suddenly to assume new and emergency duties in connection with national defense. The value of the leadership of our Regional Directors both in the field of administrative management and in the less well-charted field of relationships with the States is proving of inestimable value to the defense program. Through the regional organization it has been possible to accomplish in a few months a program which would have taken many months had it been necessary to establish a new field machinery for its effectuation. The achievements of the organization in the field of our own program are sufficient to give us faith in decentralization.

A few random statistics may give some indication of the scope and accomplishments of the programs:

Old-Age and Survivors Insurance	58,000,000 individual accounts established.
	43,000,000 employee accounts to which one or more wage items were posted last year.
Employment Security	4,250,003 actually registered in Employment Service offices.
	32,290,000 compensables under employment compensation.
Public Assistance	In 51 jurisdictions—2,200,590 recipients of old-age assistance.
	In 44 jurisdictions—900,962 dependent children aided.
	In 43 jurisdictions—50,421 needy blind aided.

These figures are more than statistical statements. They represent the millions of "Mary and John Smiths" who are our clients and also, parenthetically, our bosses. The record of their wages may be more efficiently maintained in the central Baltimore office, where the mechanical miracle of recording which will produce an individual wage record out of 58 million of them in three minutes is an essential part of our job. But when it comes to developing other personal data upon which the payment of that claim to John Smith or to his widow or children must be based, then the availability within his reach of an office in which he may sit down with a representative of the Board is a basic factor of relationship in the establishment of our social insurance program.

Measure of the success of the two programs whose major problems must be solved through negotiation with the States cannot be on a quantitative basis. The fact that within six years there has been established a cooperative relationship which has carried the strength of a nationwide organization and of Federal financial aid from Washington to beneficiaries in every county of every State is the test of our administrative plan. Such results are not achieved by remote control or by paper plans. They were worked out across the table through a sharing of responsibility and of leadership by the officials of the Nation, of the States, of the cities, and of the counties. And in this we find the measurement of our success.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONS IN THE FIELD SERVICE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

by

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THE FIELD official who directly serves both a technical official in Washington and a regional administrator in the field leads a harried existence. I have always felt sympathetic toward one particular field official in the West who was on the same day directed by his technical superior in Washington to proceed immediately to San Francisco and by his regional administrator in the field to rush to Butte, Montana. Perplexed, he wired his Bureau chief for instructions as to which official should be obeyed. A telegram came back from the Bureau chief reading, "Cooperate with both fully!" The problem stated there is really the core of the problem of field administration.

FUNCTIONAL VERSUS TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

If I were to attempt to dramatize the problem of interdepartmental relations in the field, I should say that there is a constant war between two rival principles: the principle of functional organization and the principle of territorial organization. The principle of functional organization you are all fully familiar with. You know that the line of authority descends from the President through Cabinet and other officers directly under the President, each of whom is held responsible for some large functional sphere, such as agriculture, labor, or public works. In turn, each of these key officials distributes portions of his broad functional sphere among bureau chiefs.

The territorial principle of organization has never been wholly absent, even at the departmental level. We ourselves have a Department of State that is a Department for dealing with all the world outside of the United States, and also a Department of the Interior whose name, as Secretary Ickes has pointed out, appears to give that Department authority over everything except foreign affairs. The Tennessee Valley Authority is one of the clearest acknowledgments of the territorial principle of organization. In foreign countries, too, the territorial principle receives varying degrees of recognition. In the Republic of France, you may recall, there were territorial departments, each of which was in charge of a Prefect who represented the National Government. There were some functional exceptions to that, but basically the Prefect supervised the functions of the Government in his area. Under the threat of military invasion,

Great Britain has been divided into a dozen regions, each of which is so organized that if its communications with Whitehall were to be cut off it could continue with a fully coordinated administration of the service and regulatory functions of the National Government.

Our chief problem is to attempt to harmonize these two principles of functional and territorial organization. This problem is one of great moment, for it is apparent that there is a flaw in a system of national administration that never pulls departmental operations together except at the Presidential level, and that seldom pulls bureau operations together except in the department head's office at Washington. The test of successful Federal administration is not, after all, simply to be found in statistical totals or averages for the nation as a whole. At some point in our Federal administration there must be a realization that the effect on one man's farm, on one community, or on one county of all the Federal programs operating simultaneously is the real test of the success of Federal administration. The aggregate of Federal programs must produce a pattern of effects that is as sound in terms of a few square miles occupied by some ordinary community as it is in terms of the "grand policy" of the top executives in Washington.

My thesis about interdepartmental relations in the field is very simple. It consists of the following propositions: (1) The basic organization of Federal administrative authority follows the functional principle. (2) Therefore, barring a drastic reorientation of the American Government, the territorial principle of organizing Federal administrative authority must be regarded as secondary, and so must be abandoned wherever it conflicts directly with the functional principle. That is, you cannot organize on both principles. You can have one supplement the other, but you can't use both as the central principle. One or the other has to have the ascendancy. And, finally, as a recognition of the importance and desirability of working both together, (3) Every effort should be made to utilize the territorial principle as a basis for energizing, informing, and integrating the work of officials in the functional hierarchy.

THE PROBLEM OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

Probably the best approach that we can make to our problem is to try to analyze the factors that make interdepartmental cooperation in the field work more successfully than if they were absent. So, in somewhat didactic fashion, I shall attempt to suggest the factors, which, more than any others, should be watched if you wish to facilitate interdepartmental coordination in the field.

The first factor is familiarity with other agencies' work. You cannot anticipate conflicts and duplications unless you know what

the other agencies are doing. Development of familiarity with the work of others should not only enable us to anticipate conflicts and duplications, but should enable the coordinating officials to start off with the problem of coordination—not with educating each one on what the other does when he's back in his own office. How are you going to develop this familiarity—this acquaintance with the other agencies' work? Obviously, the *U. S. Government Manual*, the *Congressional Directory*, and similar publications should be widely distributed and read in the field service. A second source of familiarity should be the training programs for field personnel. I have observed in training programs a certain tendency to have the first lecture or two be a lecture on what *our* agency does and how it is organized, but never a lecture in the training program on what other agencies do that impinges on our work. In referring to the need for familiarity with other agencies' work, I do not mean, of course, that we should all be thoroughly familiar with how the Panama Canal Railway is organized, but I do mean that the agencies that are closely related to our work deserve our attention. Third, it seems to me that annual reports of the related agencies are also good sources for this information. You are all familiar, of course, with the regular annual reports, but I should like to go a step beyond them and suggest that reports covering all Federal agencies' work, on a State or regional basis, might be very genuinely useful in this work of acquaintance with what our neighbors are doing in the same field area in which we are working. This has been done to some extent. In 1935 and 1936 the National Emergency Council published reports on State-wide coordination meetings. It seems to me that such a plan has very great usefulness and might well be revived. This, then, is one basis for effective coordination.

A second factor facilitating interdepartmental coordination is informal acquaintance. I tend to rank this somewhat higher than any other factor. It is not something that you can make profound statements about. All that it means is that coordination flows more smoothly if the people who are cooperating know each other by their first names instead of as "Dear Sir". As you know, in Washington more coordination is done across the luncheon table than is done during the other hours of the day. And I think something like that in the field would also be true. There are already operating some methods of promoting this informal acquaintance, particularly the Federal Business Associations, which are luncheon groups for bringing Federal officials together in a particular community and getting them acquainted with each other so that they know who the people are with whom they are supposed to cooperate. I believe the USDA clubs, also, are promoters of this same type of acquaintance among field officials of the Department of Agriculture.

A third factor in coordination is physical proximity. That simply means that the people who are to cooperate with each other ought to be near each other. You know that you can cooperate better with a man that lives next door to you than with a person living miles away. And there are no long-distance calls you have to worry about in connection with your budget, and no long travel trips which may cause the Washington officials to raise their eyebrows if you are over-cooperative. Now, how are you going to get this? One method, of course—and the principal method—is greater uniformity in the choice of headquarter cities in the field. We should admit at the outset that perfect uniformity is neither attainable nor desirable. Increased uniformity of headquarters can be promoted in either of two ways. One is to say flatly to Federal agencies that they have to adhere to a prescribed list of headquarters or give adequate reasons to the Bureau of the Budget. And the other way is to let the agencies voluntarily choose their cities, in the hope that there will be a steadily increasing tendency towards uniformity in the location of field offices. I should be inclined to emphasize the latter method, coupling with it an emphasis upon certain cities as the nuclei of Federal field activities and educating Federal agencies in the advantages of locating their field headquarters at these cities. In each field center, continued emphasis should be placed on the advantages of housing all Federal field officials in a single large Federal building, for this, too, promotes physical proximity.

A fourth basis for coordination is a specific objective. There is no such thing as coordination in general. You don't just coordinate. You coordinate about some specific problem limited to some particular subject-matter field. Nevertheless, many a conference is called with only a vague objective of "coordination."

The fifth factor is a limited number of participants, which is an old principle even in forming boards and commissions. You can work better if you are working with a few people; under such circumstances, agreement can be arrived at quickly.

Finally, as a factor promoting coordination, you need approximately equal status of the participants. I think that, in the first place, the participants must have equal status in terms of discretionary authority to speak for and commit their agency to some particular step. And that is, I find, a tremendous barrier to coordination in the field because some field administrators, as you know, are not allowed to open their mouths without wiring Washington for permission. Obviously, calling Washington involves a loss of time, and if the representative of the centralized agency is the one with whom the others have to get coordinated, he holds them all up.

In the second place, equal status is important in terms of the area represented. And here you run into a problem. The field

agencies do not have similar districts. You cannot get coordination on problems of the South, for instance, because there is no Southern region to which all the Federal agencies adhere. District boundaries vary greatly. In a study made some years ago it appeared that not a single agency had districts that coincided with those of any other agency in the Federal Government. Consequently there cannot readily be a coordination conference on the basis of any particular region. As States often are not used as administrative districts, you cannot fall back on them and attempt to coordinate at a lower level. A great many agencies split the States, some ignoring State boundaries entirely in favor of following river valleys, economic areas, or metropolitan influence regions. The result is that in order to hold a coordination meeting, say for my State of North Carolina, attended by the ranking field officials next below the Washington level, you would have to call the Commandant of the Naval District from Charleston, South Carolina, the commanding officer of the Army Corps Area and the regional officer of the Civil Aeronautics Authority from Atlanta, the regional officers of the Social Security Board and the Secret Service from Washington, D. C., and the district director of the Bureau of Narcotics from Baltimore.

Summarizing to this point, we have seen that the factors that facilitate interdepartmental cooperation in the field are: (1) Familiarity with other agencies' work; (2) informal acquaintance; (3) physical proximity; (4) a specific objective; (5) a limited number of participants; and (6) approximately equal status of the participants.

COORDINATION OF HOUSEKEEPING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS

Now we turn to an analysis that, perhaps, should have come first. We have been talking about coordination among departments as if we knew what coordination was. It is essential to realize that interdepartmental coordination operates at a number of levels—not levels in terms of territory, but levels in terms of the process. One of those is coordination for the purpose of developing economy and efficiency in what the language of the textbooks calls “institutional or house-keeping services”. That is, such coordination is directed toward the development of economy and efficiency at the field level in such matters as personnel management, equipment and supplies, libraries, travel authorization, office and storage space, and printing. There has been some experimentation with this type of field coordination, particularly between 1921 and 1933, when the Bureau of the Budget, which has since gone through quite a change, had a Federal Coordinating Service. The Federal Coordinating Service split the country into seven to nine areas and at the head of these areas placed an area coordinator. And, on the local level, under the Federal Coordinating Service, were the Federal Business Associations, which reported to the

area coordinators and not only acted as local luncheon clubs but participated actively in this process of coordination for economy and efficiency. The greatest achievement of which they boast is that they were able to obtain a loan of trucks and automobiles from the other agencies for the Post Office Department during the Christmas rush. It is a type of coordination which is very much to be encouraged. To further this coordination of the institutional and housekeeping services, you again have to emphasize uniformity of field organization. Suppose a department wishes to decentralize its work, say in personnel appointments or fiscal matters. It cannot very well accomplish much in the way of true decentralization if it decentralizes but the Civil Service Commission and the Procurement Division of the Treasury don't also decentralize to an equal degree and give permission for actions to move horizontally in the field. If one of them requires that matters must go to Washington before the action becomes official, you're obviously not going to have true decentralization. Again I find myself unable to recommend any simple solution.

Another phase of field organization is coordination along the lines of public relations, press relations, and relations with State legislatures, governors, and administrators. Now, all of us have, in a sense, public relations, and all of these functions must be handled separately by Federal agencies. I am not advocating a centralized service to handle public relations because I feel that most of the functions are specialized according to the agency and must be handled by the agency. I don't think that the Federal Government can have a lobbyist with the legislature to represent all the Federal agencies in the State, but there can be, it seems to me, special coordination on the informational aspect of public relations. Such coordination would try to save the public from getting the run-around from one agency to another. The Washington official tends to assume that everybody knows about the different organizational setups and what their functions are, but the ordinary person of the country thinks of the Federal Government as "the Government." He thinks of it as a unified whole. That is a very challenging problem for Federal administration and has never been fully met. The solution lies in part along the lines of distributing information through the *U. S. Government Manual*, the annual reports of Federal agencies, and the Statewide reports that I suggested earlier. Beyond those devices, you need an active representative of the Federal Government at the community level. In order to avoid multiplication of personnel beyond necessities, it would be my suggestion that postmasters in cities and towns and county agents in the rural areas should be trained so that they can genuinely represent the whole government in the local area in the sense of being equipped to help the citizen get in touch with the appropriate field agent of the appropriate Federal agency.

COORDINATION OF PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

A third type of field coordination relates to planning and program formulation. The subject is important and a little troublesome because in the Federal Government most of the policy is determined in Washington, rather than in the field. You do have certain machinery, of course, for decentralized planning—such machinery as the regional planning commissions and state planning boards, and in particular areas, such agencies as the TVA which can act as nuclei for planning activities. The chief characteristic of coordinated planning is that it involves the over-all view. You are going to have difficulty in getting the several Federal agencies to take the over-all view at the field level. In the past we have done little to bring all Federal agencies together on a regional basis or to develop a total Federal view of a particular region. If we are to overcome the inherent difficulties of a multiplicity of agencies, we will have to use the regional planning commissions and state planning boards to the greatest possible extent. The regionally-chosen planning commission, or its counterpart at the State level, composed of citizens of the region, or State, has the best opportunity to take the over-all view, to try to bind together all the segmentary views of individual Federal, State, and local agencies, and to make a coordinated plan for the area. Whether it remains just a plan on paper or becomes actuality will necessarily depend upon the attitudes of Federal and State officials.

Finally, there is field coordination on operational matters, as distinguished on the one hand from program formulation, and on the other hand from the mere processing of travel vouchers and things of that sort. There is, in the first place, a much larger degree of cooperation at the field level than Washington officials realize. It is on an informal basis. The county agent may go to another official who has knowledge about a certain agricultural problem and get his advice on that matter. That isn't a formal type of cooperation. In one situation where a national forest surrounded a national park, the Forest Service and National Park Service reached an agreement whereby the forester was authorized to patrol not merely the forest but the park as well. These traditionally rival agencies have set a pattern for other agencies to follow.

Should you have field machinery to encourage this sort of coordination of operations? The best case study is provided by the National Emergency Council, which had State directors who were designated by the President as his personal representatives for purposes of coordinating the whole Federal Government's operations. Although that bolstered their prestige, it did not arm them with authority. They couldn't give orders. In fact, for good strategic reasons, the National Emergency Council did not want authority to order

other Federal agencies about. Its State Directors were facilitators and sponsors of coordination. Although the National Emergency Council State Director was authorized to coordinate all Federal agencies, he spent practically all of his time coordinating the agencies engaged in the works program. There were a number of reasons for this. New agencies are always a little like children. They have the curious problem of not knowing precisely what their functions are, so, like children, they run first this way and then that way, stopping only when another agency resists their encroachments. Eventually they learn that there are danger areas over at the sides that they mustn't trespass upon, and so their work becomes canalized. Old-line agencies do not present quite the same problem, for their experimental years are behind them. The new agency has other characteristics that make it need outside coordination. It usually recruits a whole new staff that hasn't been thoroughly trained in the agency's scope of authority. A new agency is often headed by enthusiastic administrators who want to do an excellent job, and to some extent, therefore, reach out for more than they should. Dissatisfaction because of the failure of other agencies to do thoroughly competent jobs also tempts the confident new agency to try to take over their responsibilities. The concentration of the National Emergency Council State Directors on problems relating to public works programs persuaded me that the elaborate field coordination machinery would not be needed after the depression ended as there would then be very little work for any of the directors to do. On the other hand, the experience of the War Department, the Department of Agriculture, the War Production Board, and other agencies suggests that for *intra*-agency coordination in the field there should be in each region a representative of the head of the agency, who should facilitate coordination at the field level, and refer to the agency head such problems as must be settled in Washington. This arrangement raises a whole series of questions with respect to possible conflicts between functional and territorial lines of authority within the individual agency. These questions are, however, beyond the scope of the present discussion of *interagency* coordination.

There is also a personnel problem that should be considered, namely, what sort of a person should a field coordinator be? This is a very difficult problem, as the experience of the Social Security Board and other agencies makes clear. In many ways the better type of politician is not at all to be scorned. The politician is used to getting along with everybody. He is used to assimilating everything they say and getting a program developed that is practical enough to be turned into legislation. He is accustomed to taking the over-all view of government activities and is in the habit of approaching problems from the standpoint of the affected citizen.

A SUGGESTED APPROACH

The general problem of field coordination, to be placed in its proper perspective, must be approached with a recognition of the fact that the majority of the significant instances of conflict and duplication in the field do not originate in the field but have their source in Washington and can be definitively settled only at Washington. The instances of lack of coordination in the field which you read about in the newspapers have a curious tendency to multiply. They crop up in the North and the South, in the West, until it is clear that you cannot settle the problem merely at the county level or the State level. The problem transcends these areas. For example, cases which arise in various parts of the United States may reveal that while rural housing is taken care of by loans from the Farm Security Administration, and urban housing is taken care of by the Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration, there is a category known as rural-nonfarm housing for which no Federal loan agency is responsible. Such cases establish a national instance of inadequate service on the part of the Government and it is very clear that you must get your solution at Washington. Of course, the generalization that most of the significant instances of conflict are at Washington is not completely true of the highly decentralized agencies. But, you remember, I argued earlier that the decentralized agencies have problems in coordination because they often have to get coordinated with centralized organizations. Whenever that is true, therefore, the cause for the lack of coordination may well be at Washington; that is, the centralized agency may be the one that is erring in its practices in the field, and it is erring not because of the field officials' dereliction, but because of errors at Washington.

A most important step to be taken toward coordination of field operations is the development of studies on a representative community or representative county basis to reveal defects in the ways Federal activities affect that community or county. I have already suggested that many of the solutions have to be worked out in Washington. I suggested that the Federal organization has to make sense at the community level. It is also true that the evidence of lack of coordination frequently crops up first in the field—not in Washington. Therefore, it seems to me that the best way to find out where coordination is needed is to take a few communities and make a study covering the whole Federal Government. How well are the Federal Government's functions coordinated below the Presidential level? How well do they, when they stream out from the President, reunite to form an intelligible pattern of effects. What persons are left out of the picture? What conflicts do you find?

That sort of study under the sponsorship of some central agency like the Bureau of the Budget, or, perhaps, an outside agency, would be extremely valuable in revealing where you need coordination. And, of course, needless to say, that sort of study is not a job to be done once and for all but would need to be repeated from time to time. That is the only way you will be able to get a picture of the Federal Government as it affects the community.

Now, in conclusion, let me suggest where I think the coordination ought to start. We have been talking about interdepartmental organization. I suggest that coordination ought to start within the bureaus, and within the departments. And then, when you solve that problem, you can turn, perhaps, to the more difficult problem of interdepartmental coordination. This is because within a bureau the employees perform closely related functions; tend to a uniform philosophy; recognize a superior official who can compel coordination; and have a common, rather than a competitive, interest in justifying the bureau's work to Congress and the public. A first step toward interdepartmental coordination, therefore, is giving the proof that we have successfully mastered the problem within the bureaus and departments. Once that has been achieved, we can begin talking about setting up machinery for interdepartmental coordination.

